

# Trojan language

There are no direct records for what language the historical Trojans spoke at the time of the Trojan War.<sup>[a][b]</sup> The language likely to have been prevalent in the historical city is the Luwian language.

Trojan	
<b>Region</b>	Troy
<b>Era</b>	c. 1200 BCE
<b>Language family</b>	unattested
Language codes	
<b>ISO 639-2</b>	und ( <a href="https://www.loc.gov/standards/iso639-2/php/langcodes_name.php?code_ID=474">https://www.loc.gov/standards/iso639-2/php/langcodes_name.php?code_ID=474</a> )
<b>ISO 639-3</b>	und
<b>Glottolog</b>	None

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## Greek epics

Greek legend gives indications on the subject of language at Troy. For one thing, the allies of Troy, listed at length in the Trojan Battle Order which closes book 2 of the *Iliad*, are depicted as speaking various languages and thus needing to have orders translated to them by their commanders (2.802–806). Elsewhere in the poem (4.433–438) they are compared to sheep and lambs bleating in a field as they talk together in their different languages. The inference is that, from the Greek point of view, the languages of Trojans and their allied neighbors were not as unified as those of the Achaeans.

## Luwian theory

There was not enough evidence to fruitfully speculate upon the language of Troy until 1995, when a late Hittite seal was found in the excavations at Troy, probably dating from about 1275 BC. Not considered a locally made object, this item from the Trojan "state chancellery" was inscribed in Luwian and to date provides the *only* archaeological evidence for any language at Troy at this period. It indicates that Luwian was known at Troy, which is not surprising since it was a lingua franca of the Hittite empire, of which Troy was probably in some form of dependency.

Another sphere of research concerns a handful of Trojan personal names mentioned in the *Iliad*. Among sixteen recorded names of Priam's relatives, at least nine (including Anchises and Aeneas) are not Greek and may be traced to "pre-Greek Asia Minor".<sup>[1]</sup> On this basis Calvert Watkins in 1986 argued that the Trojans may have been Luwian-speaking. For instance, the name Priam is connected to the Luwian compound Pariya-muwa, which means "exceptionally courageous".<sup>[2]</sup>

Additionally, the Alaksandu treaty describes Mira, Haballa, Seha and Wilusa (usually identified with Troy) as the lands of Arzawa, although this "has no historical or political basis",<sup>[3]</sup> suggesting that it was the language that they had in common. Frank Starke of the University of Tübingen concludes that "the certainty is growing that Wilusa/Troy belonged to the greater Luwian-speaking community".<sup>[4]</sup> Joachim Latacz also regards Luwian as the official language of Homeric Troy, but he finds it highly probable that another

language was in daily use.<sup>[4]</sup> Ilya Yakubovich provides a critical evaluation of the arguments by Watkins and Starke in his [University of Chicago](#) dissertation and concludes that the ethnicity of the Trojans remains completely unknown.<sup>[5]</sup>

## Notes

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- a. Corresponding to the archaeological site [Troy VIIa](#).
- b. This language is identified with the Troy of the Greek epics to a greater or lesser degree, depending on judgements regarding the [historicity of the Iliad](#).

## References

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1. H. von Kamptz. *Homerische Personennamen*. Gottingen, 1982, pp. 380–382.
2. Starke, Frank. "Troia im Kontext des historisch-politischen und sprachlichen Umfeldes Kleinasiens im 2. Jahrtausend". *Studia Troica* 7 (1997) pp. 447–87.
3. [Latacz 2004](#), p. 115.
4. Quoted from [Latacz 2004](#), p. 116.
5. Yakubovich, Ilya. *Sociolinguistics of the Luvian Language*, Leiden, 2010, pp. 117–129

## Sources

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- [Dalby, Andrew \(2006\), \*Rediscovering Homer\* \(<https://archive.org/details/rediscoveringhom00dalb>\)](#), New York, London: Norton, ISBN 0-393-05788-7, pp. 129–133.
- [Latacz, Joachim \(2004\), \*Troy and Homer: towards a solution of an old mystery\*](#), Oxford: Oxford University Press, ISBN 0-19-926308-6, pp. 49–72.
- Ross, Shawn A., "Barbarophonos: Language and Panhellenism in the *Iliad*," *Classical Philology* 100 (2005), pp. 299–316.
- [Watkins, Calvert \(1986\), "The language of the Trojans" in \*Troy and the Trojan War: a symposium held at Bryn Mawr College, October 1984\* ed. M. J. Mellink. Bryn Mawr.](#)

## Further reading

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- The cultural context in which the lost Trojan language existed is described by [Jaan Puhvel, \*Homer and Hittite\* \(1991\)](#).

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